

LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

continuing

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Edited by ROBERT HERRING

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EDITORIAL

1942

LAST MONTH, I wrote of paper-knives made from bomb-splinters. This month, despite the rival claims of book-ends from Houses of Parliament stone, it is paper-weights to which reference must be made; weights in the literal sense of how many reams make one hundredweight—a quantity as to which, I may say, printer, paper controller, and editor were at a variance at first more expressive of individuality than of co-operation. The adjustment was easy, but made at the expense of time which it is not presumptuous to say, had been better devoted to editing. I therefore decided to postpone, rather than to skimp preparation of, the Elizabethan number, announced for this month. This has been done with the lighter heart in that it enabled both consideration of further MSS. and the possibility of publication on a notably more appropriate date—that of Twelfth Night.

Later issues next year will be as announced on the inside front cover. In view of these plans, and earlier mention of paper-weight, I should add that, though we are at present fortunate in our ration, should it ever be further cut we shall endeavour still to present as much reading-matter in fewer pages. But only in so far as is consonant with legibility, and that I would emphasize. A review must be readable in make-up as well as in matter, and I will not, like some editions, descend to type of a size which only an ant's eye could read without incurring astigmata. In this, I am sure, readers will be with me as much as they have already shown they are in other directions.

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After paper-weights, rulers. These should be kept for measuring. By too many, they are used for rapping. Knuckles goad the neurotic and when not a class but a complete country knuckles under, neuroses and rulers run riot.

The smirching of fair France has afforded many the opportunity to clasp more fervently that ruler of which their itching fingers can never have enough. France fell. "Beware" barked the self-appointed teachers and, after a few smart raps, chalked on the blackboard "Spiritual Collapse". A Frenchman here or there regained inner freedom by leaving or by becoming clandestinely vocal. "Moral regeneration" became the text which the ruler wielder preached as sermon to an audience that, we are surprised to discover, is meant to be ourselves.

With the best will in the world, let the class now come to attention and refuse to be rapped.

Ignorance and complacency are among our main sins and we may seem at times in this war to have taken every opportunity to display them. We deserve to be warned of our shortcomings, but those who rap must be reminded of our outgivings as well. From the fate of other countries, conclusions can be drawn—but comparisons cannot be made, for the simple reason that at no time did any section of this population take to the roads, either physically or spiritually. As to those taking to the air, that was first done by the very section some of our rudest ruler-rappers have called "effete". When it came to it, here in England, two years ago, no section of the community turned against the other, no section complained it lacked leadership or listeners. We were all, perhaps, each one of us, too busy drawing upon whatever we had in us to behave as well as the next man. But the result of the raids was not that we saluted each other for bravery; we regarded them as irrelevant interruptions, which had the rudeness to make necessary a manifestation of spirit we found embarrassing.

At any rate, to put it at its lowest terms, we faced that embarrassment. To put the problem of India at its lowest—at least India, after fifty years of British *raj*, has an uncrushed spirit to revolt (and at last Indian officers have equal authority with their white colleagues over British troops). To put “equal compensation for women” at its lowest, at least the spirit of service in women of this country is such that they did not wait to be conscripted; men in this country know that if they sprain an ankle, break an arm, almost any woman here will set it. We may not *kuess die Hand*, but we shake it, and as we shake it, we know the grip is a salute of soul . . . at least one of the reasons why we won the Battle of Britain is that we were confident that the women were with, not behind, us.

As a nation and as individuals, we have our sins (I would put coldness, callowness, lack of colour, and cacophony among them). But sins are to be enjoyed (since we choose them) and respected (since we use them). They are not things to be denied, but directed. Without our Saturday sins, we lack springboard for weekday starting and canteen for return and resilience . . . with our sins taken into account, we need no regeneration.

We need reawakening, but that does not come from the ruler-rappers. That comes from ourselves, and whilst thanking the young for their encouraging example of “carrying on”, I will take it upon myself to thank some of my contemporaries to set a better one themselves.

I will also remind both that what the world is interested in about a poet is not his career but his poetry. Too many recent publications, periodicals, and persons of late forward the one at the expense of the latter. No rapping here, merely a reminder that some of the best boys in the class can caricature themselves without knowing it.

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GREEN SONG

AFTER THE LONG and portentous eclipse of the patient sun
The sudden spring began
With the bird-sounds of Doom in the egg, and Fate in the
bud that is flushed with the world's fever—
But those bird-songs have trivial voices and sound not like
thunder,
And the sound when the bud bursts is no more the sound
of the worlds that are breaking.—
But the youth of the world, the lovers, said "It is Spring !
And we who were black with the winter's shade, and old,
See the emeralds are awake upon the branches
And grasses, bird-blood leaps within our veins
And is changed to emeralds like the sap in the grasses.
The beast-philosopher hiding in the orchards
Who had grown silent from the world's long cold
Will tell us the secret of how spring began
In the young world before the Fall of Man.
For you are the young spring earth
And I, O Love, your dark and lowering heaven."

But an envious ghost in the Spring world
Sang to them a shrunken song
Of the world's right and wrong :
Whispered to them through the leaves, "I wear
The world's cold for a coat of mail
Over my body bare—
I have no heart to shield my bone
But with the world's cold am alone—
And soon your heart, too, will be gone—
My day's darling."

The naked Knight in the coat of mail
Shrieked like a bird that flies through the leaves—
The dark bird proud as the Prince of the Air

"I am the world's last love . . . Beware—
Young girl, you press your lips to lips
That are already cold :—
For even the bright earthly dress
Shall prove, at last, unfaithfulness.

"His country's love will steal his heart—
To you it will turn cold
When foreign earth lies on the breast
Where your young heart was wont to rest
Like leaves upon young leaves, when warm was the green
 spray
And warm was the heart of youth, my day's darling.

"And if that ghost return to you—
(The dead disguised as a living man)—
Then I will come like Poverty
And wear your face, and give your kiss,
And shrink the world, and that sun the heart
Down to a penny's span.

"For there is a sound you heard in youth,
A flower whose light is lost—
There is a faith and a delight—
They lie at last beneath my frost ;
When I am come like Time that all men, faiths, loves, suns
 defeat,
My frost despoils the day's young darling.

"For the young heart like the spring wind grows cold
And the dust, the shining racer, is overtaking
The laughing young people who are running like fillies,
The golden ladies and the ragpickers
And the foolish companions of spring, the wild wood
 lilies."

But the youth of the world said "Give me your golden
hand
That is but earth, yet it holds the lands of heaven
And you are the sound of the growth of spring in the
heart's deep core,
The hawthorn-blossoming boughs of the stars and the
young orchards' emerald lore."

And hearing that, the poor ghost fled like the winter rain,
Sank into greenish dust like the fallen moon
Or the sweet green dust of the lime-flowers that will be
blossoming soon—
And spring grew warm again—

No more the accusing light, revealing the rankness of
Nature,
All motives and desires and lack of desire
In the human heart, but loving all life, it comes to bless
Immortal things in their poor earthly dress—
The blind of life beneath the frost of their great winter,
And those for whom the winter breaks in flower
And summer grows from a long-shadowed kiss.
And Love is the vernal equinox in the veins
When the sun crosses the marrow and pith of the heart
Among the veridian smells, the green rejoicing.
All names, sounds, faiths, delights, and duties lost
Return to the hearts of men, those households of high
heaven.

And voices speak in the woods as from a nest
Of leaves—they sing of rest,
And love, and toil, the rhythms of their lives,
Singing how winter's dark was overcome,
And making plans for to-morrow as though yesterday
Had never been, nor the lonely ghost's old sorrow.

And Time seemed but the beat of heart to heart,
And Death the pain of earth turning to spring again
When lovers meet after the winter rain.
And when we are gone, they will see in the great mornings
Born of our lives, some memory of us, the golden stalk
Of the young long-petalled flower of the sun in the pale air
Among the dew . . . Are we not all of the same substance,
Men, planets, and earth, born from the heart of darkness,
Returning to darkness, the consoling mother
For the short winter sleep—O my calyx of the flower of
the world, you the spirit
Moving upon the waters, the light on the breast of the
dove.

EDITH SITWELL

NOTE.— In the *Grasmere Journal*, 8th May, 1802, Dorothy Wordsworth wrote, "I wept for names, sounds, faiths, delights and duties lost, taken from a poem on Cavley's wish to retire to the Plantations."

HULME AS HORATIO

By J. F. HENDRY

HULME WAS POSSESSED by the image of "Cinders". "The absolute," he says, "is to be described, not as perfect, but if existent, as essentially imperfect, chaotic, and cinder-like."¹

His constant use of this metaphor reveals that to him it was of great significance. We shall not attempt here to find out exactly what that significance was, nor to relate it to his general philosophy, a task already ably carried out by Michael Roberts. Rather shall we try to place that image in time, and relate it to others of like date, in the hope that thereby we may gain some conception of where we are going.

The first thing to note is that Hulme's vision of reality is closely akin to T. S. Eliot's image of "The Waste Land". The common quality seems to be their belief that reality is brittle, possibly even breaking up, and more than that, their interpretation of this "reality" in terms which are always wholly material and inorganic, "broken glass in a dry cellar". Thus their historical significance seems to lie in the fact that in them, as individuals, a "scientific-materialist" outlook on the world is coming to an end, if indeed it is not already dead. Their imagery implies a whole superstructure of philosophy and experience known to be outmoded. Both therefore sought something to replace the excessively objective outlook which was in process of collapse. Mr. Eliot embraced the Anglican faith. Hulme thought he had found his panacea in a philosophy, the core of which, perhaps, was Bergson's conception of intuition.

Bergson, however, in describing the use of images, also revealed his mental attitude, since he regarded the

¹ *Speculations.*

advantage of imagery as being "that it keeps us in the concrete." Here again is seen the cindery vision peculiar to Hulme and Eliot. "By choosing images as dissimilar as possible," wrote Bergson, "we shall prevent any one of them from usurping the place of the intuition it is intended to call up, since it would be driven away by its rivals."¹

This, of course, is precisely Rimbaud's technique of dissociation and not association at all. It is reminiscent of the surrealists whose juxtaposition of images drawn from the concrete is designed, often deliberately, to provide the shock of "surprise", that is, of intuition. Even in thought Hulme was breaking-down, therefore, not building.

The weakness of these attitudes is their failure to establish any kind of absolute, though such was Bergson's aim and Hulme's desire. "What is relative is the symbolic knowledge by pre-existing concepts, which proceeds from the fixed to the moving, and not the intuitive knowledge which installs itself in that which is moving, and adopts the very life of things. This intuition attains the absolute."¹

That it failed to do so in the case of surrealism and of Hulme may be due precisely to this fact, that it is an attitude, a pre-existing concept (Hulme's "cinders"; Bergson's "concrete") which may actually become the symbolic knowledge Bergson says is relative. Many of the surrealist designs notoriously fail because they are deliberate, fixed, and not a spontaneous release of the unconscious at all. Truth, Hulme seems to say, with Krieck the Nazi philosopher, depends on the pre-existent image in the spectator's mind. Actually, the pre-existent image should be regarded as a subject for study, and intuition may come with investigation.

If, however, such images are not "intuitive" in so far as they are partly conditioned, the question arises how

¹ *Introduction à la Métaphysique.*

they have been thus conditioned, these visions of deadness against which both Hulme and surrealists revolt. They seem to be the result of the psychological twist inherited from the Age of Enlightenment, and especially from the Industrial Revolution, which prevents us seeing reality essentially in terms of people, but which clings to the objective world of matter for its own sake, in the belief that somehow, in ruins as it is, it must yet be the sole significant standard of value, a power illimitable. By "twist" I mean no more than "way of looking at things", what Americans call "angle". No revolt against reason as such is involved, only against the "angle" which has turned that reason outwards.

Thus, while Hulme rejects the nineteenth-century concept of the inevitability of progress, he still retained the nineteenth-century concept of the intrinsic value of the material world, and his cindery-imagery reveals this clearly. Equally, his constant attempt to think in a straight line, the line of progress, betrays his mental approach. He fought of course against this, as can be seen in his notes. These are full of what I might call thinking in clots, in lumps. The thoughts are thrown up like gold nuggets and turned over for testing. This is organic thinking, *real* intuition because quite free of pre-existing concepts or attitudes. If, too often, the nuggets turned out to be mere cinders instead of gold, it can only have been because of the historical colouring of his mind, because the soil contained more ash than precious metal. Hulme is therefore, unknown perhaps to himself, the philosopher of the materialist world in decline as Eliot was its poet.

His search for a new classicism and ethereal absolute is the counterpart of Mr. T. S. Eliot's conversion, and its error consists in its assumption that man must be deserted for the abstract, because of the failure of an abstraction.

"There is," says Hulme, "no bridge from the finite

to the Infinite; the world is finite and we cannot escape from its surface.”¹ Here, unmistakably, the soil of historical materialism clings to the nugget. Thus he enunciates his famous three categories of reality, the organic, the inorganic, and the religious, and declares them separate, not as a mere technique of thought, but absolutely and eternally.

In practice, whatever Hulme may assert, it seems that at various times myths serve as a bridge, and the Christian myth in fact did so in Hulme’s case, whether he recognized it or not. “The Revolutionary objective will serve the purpose of a myth and so lead to the establishment of absolute ethical values, whereas Utopian myths lead to day-dreaming.”²

Hulme’s concept is as Utopian, more Utopian, than those of outworn liberalism because he *denies* the bridge. Pope is to be independent of Emperor, and Emperor of Pope, but both Milords Spiritual and Temporal shall reign by Divine Right, and the earth shall be divided between them. Such was Dante’s original Utopia. No bridge, no communication between spirit and matter was permitted or recognized. Thus Hulme strangled his own intuition at birth. The images that did come forth from it were, like those of Rimbaud, images of dissociation, of disintegration, cinders. What might have been the foundation of a new and absolute Humanism, becomes the definition of an ancient and inverted materialism.

This inversion is seen for example in Hulme’s conception of the Deity. Belief in Him is inevitable, like belief in the objective world and matter. The analogy is significant, and hints at identity. “When the fixed instincts are repressed, they burst out in some abnormal direction. If you are not allowed to believe in Heaven, you begin to

¹ *Speculations.*

² Sorel: *Reflexions sur la Violence.*

believe in Heaven on earth. If you don't believe in God, you begin to believe that man is a god."¹

This is all right as far as it goes, but it does not go very far. Belief in a heaven on earth is a myth as belief in Heaven is a myth, and Hulme is not interested in myths, or their relative validities and social roles. He is dealing in absolutes, or trying to. Having therefore established to his own satisfaction that humanism involves belief in man as a god, he discards it and flies at once to the other extreme. Man is limited. The Deity forever separate from him.

Yet somehow man is to be ruled by the Deity. There's the rub, for if the Deity is out of touch with man, yet must rule man, He can surely do it only through a representative, and we are back at the Divine Right of Kings, where the Divine Right is in question since there is no bridge! Without the concept of myth we are lost, and the myth of humanism is as valid as the myth of Divine Right. Even Hulme asserts that all men are equal.

The trouble with this new classicism that rejected, and rightly so, Romantic Art, Pragmatic Philosophy, Modernist Religion, and Utopian Liberalism, was that it provided us in their stead with a cindery art answered in Germany with "Blubo"; a fascist-academic philosophy with none of the dynamism of nazism; cloistral religion; and the medieval utopianism of the Holy Roman Empire. It did not, as Hulme would agree, carry forward enough from Humanism. Denying the bridge, it fails to make its artifices work.

Yet because man's attempted conquest of nature, and his attempt to express himself in terms of cæsarism, have failed, there is no valid ground for believing man to be a fundamentally limited creature *in himself*. To do so, as Hulme did, is to leave out of account the very aspirations which, he warned us, would "burst out" if repressed.

¹ *Speculations.*

Nevertheless, although only man's orientation has been shown to be wrong, his previous pattern of behaviour, perhaps because it was a pattern, Hulme would have us subjected to a new pattern, one just as "objective-mechanical", thus inviting not a new world of glorious order, but a new nihilism.

Never is there a word of human attempt at self-expression through a new set of human relations. We are simply invited to exchange human exploitation in the interests of a materialist absolute, for human exploitation in the interests of mechanist idealism. And this in spite of Hulme's professed belief that "there is no average or real truth to be discovered among the different fronts of prejudice". No attempt is made to incorporate even this last important concept in any new political order. That might mean delegation of responsibility, or a new social myth of democracy, but Hulme denies bridges. He is a poor Horatio, especially for these days when the Channel is a very real bridge with an Infinite Darkness.

"Experience shows that the framing of a future in some indeterminate time may, when it is done in a certain way, be very effective, and have very few inconveniences; this happens when the anticipations of the future take the form of those myths which enclose within them all the strongest inclinations of a people, of a party, or of a class, inclinations which recur to the mind with the insistence of instincts in all the circumstances of life."¹

This is a demonstration of how a myth, representing "in the consciousness the image of which it feels the attraction", may act as a bridge, as did the myth of the French Revolution, of the Russian Revolution; in England the myth of Christianity, of human freedom. Myth, we say, because it is not yet realized but held to be capable of realization, "justifying, sustaining, and inspiring the

¹ Sorel: *Reflections sur la Violence*.

existence of a community", a bridge with what at any moment is the infinite because it is not yet attained. This is the dynamic of progression—not the old easy "progress"—active intuition, not Hulme's static surrender of that intuition to external forces.

II

Yet though he denied the bridge, he did in practice demonstrate his belief in the defence of the bridge. He lived in an era when Imperialism was on the defensive in his own state. To go forward he held to be utopian. He preferred to go back, though how far back that would have taken him he did not completely realize. He was defending the bridge as an Ideal alone.

"To Hulme," says Michael Roberts, "the prospect of a German Europe was intolerable because it meant the extinction of ideals of liberty and democracy; and though he was opposed to the ideas with which the democratic movement was associated, he was willing to fight for democracy as an 'ideal'. In its ideas, the German outlook resembled his own, but his 'ideals' were those of English democrats." This is very interesting. To-day we should say that whilst his "ideals" were English—a phrase that means little if anything—his "ideology" was German, which means a great deal indeed. I doubt if we should find this comforting, however much it may seem to approximate to unofficial war-aims.

Graham Wallas has incidentally thrown some light on the fundamental weakness of his position. "Philosophers should give us a conception of the relation between freedom and determinism which shall apply to the whole living universe, and not draw an arbitrary line as some do, dividing certain facts of psychology, which are legitimate subjects of scientific inquiry, from others which are not. . . ."¹

¹ *The Great Society*.

This strikes directly at Hulme's arbitrary division of reality into three categories, a division which in any case, like the reason he revolted against, is based on fear, for whilst it might be acceptable as a methodology, with the proviso that it should not be watertight, and that myth or imagination should operate between the three, there are no grounds whatever for declaring it absolute.

Fear is admitted by Hulme when he writes, of art in the future, "They live in a world whose lack of order and seeming arbitrariness must inspire them with a certain fear. . . . In art this state of mind results in a desire to create a certain abstract geometrical shape, which, being durable and permanent, shall be a refuge from the flux and impermanence of outside nature." ¹

Here again he does not face up to the question of *why* such an art may be expected, if indeed it now may. He denies that fear is a necessary pre-supposition for this development, but his alternative motivation, the "idea of disharmony or separation between man and nature" is but another way of expressing that same fear. It is also in flat contradiction with his introductory idea of the inevitability of separation between man and nature. Having himself declared them absolutely separate, he proceeds to look for an art which shall overcome that separation—and finds incidentally an *inorganic* one, a pyramid cinder. Had he denied the separation in the first place he might have had a clearer conception both of his own motives, and of the function of the art he described.

Again in his actual consideration of the geometrical nature of Egyptian arts, he was too content perhaps to take these for granted as isolated phenomena, ignoring the other side of the picture; Thoth of the ibis-head; the deification of animals and birds; and their identification in many cases with man. His philosophy, "scientific"

¹ *Speculations.*

though it is, leaves out of account too much of anthropology, psychology, and in this case Egyptology. There are grounds at least for supposing that these Egyptian myths and legends are the expression of the fear felt by the society for just these outside elements, the crocodile, and the scarab ; and the fact that man is himself often identified with these forces, capable of destroying him, further shows that the *geometrical* art was less a reaction to external flux than the expression of *inner* instability, just as our own institutions and cultivation of the reason are forms of inhibition, repression, or objectifications of inner conflicts. That our art is more vital than Egyptian or Byzantine therefore, may be due to the fact that we are more aware of the real nature of the conflict than were these primitive peoples, and hence better able to express it in vital terms. Our myths have more individual and social content. Only when they prove deficient in this, will a "geometric" art become likely. It is noteworthy that in Hulme the myth has become very non-human indeed.

It seems therefore that Egyptian art, and the others which Hulme considers to be purely geometrical, did in fact express in the totality of their civilizations, a deep-seated conflict, which for want of more precise terms we must call a conflict between inner and outer worlds, but one which was based essentially on *fear* of the outside world owing to its instability and flux. There is therefore less difference between the arts leading up to the Classical period, and our Renaissance and modern art, than Hulme supposed, since its vital nature is merely a consequence of recognition that the conflict is in reality an inner one, and incapable of *solution* in external, geometrical, non-human terms.

Again though the work of Epstein is continually cited in support of his thesis, it is overlooked that in addition to the geometrical, "cubism" in Picasso, Cezanne, or

Epstein, there is present a great deal of irrationality and myth. The expression of the faces, of the eyes, the choice of themes, of people and acts such as procreation, show that Epstein is as close to myth and symbolism as were the primitive Egyptians, and this is as significant as the geometrical element *per se*.

Furthermore the distinction between the Byzantine-Egyptian-Indian and the Western civilizations becomes less still when we consider their achievement. The pyramids represented to the Egyptians, as Hulme shows, precisely that conquest of space and time which we attempt to achieve to-day in industrial development, the railway, the aeroplane, the giant liner, and which the Middle Ages attempted to achieve in the cathedral and the chronicle. The psychological trend in both cases is the same, inhibition, objectification of the inner feeling of insecurity. Hence wars become bigger and better, not only outside the society in question but inside, since no amount of objectification in modern times can abolish or disguise man's awareness of inner conflict. Thus, as well as military wars on the grand scale we may, if we yield to Hulme, expect petty gangsterdom, violence in private life, lawless anarchy, the jitterbug with a gun.

This Hulme also admits when he envisages the break-up of the Renaissance humanistic attitude. And make no mistake, this is a process much more fundamentally disastrous than the superficial scratching implied in the phrase "break-down of liberalism". It has political implications, of course, totalitarianism, for example; but the effects inside man are liable to be even more devastating, for it must be remembered that the societies to which Hulme looks back were helot-states of the worst type, so that ultimately the break-up of humanism must result inevitably in a slow and ineluctable return to slavery, literal and inescapable, the most frightful victory in fact,

of the *forces* (not necessarily the nation) which we are now fighting against.

It is to be hoped that he miscalculated.

The intuition which Hulme neglected, can be seen therefore to be of extreme psychological importance, and the core of the internal conflict at work in modern society. No attempt at external solutions based on purely materialist or abstract conceptions, can go very far towards solving it, though they may for a time repress it. This "intuition" seems therefore to be the dynamic, that driving-force which, he held, derived from the religious sense of absolute obligation, but which seems to have an immediate origin in the Unconscious. The latest theories of Jung make it seem likely that it is of an affective nature, precisely that "palpable and obvious love of man for man" dismissed by Michael Roberts. The human problem must therefore be conceived in terms of human relations first.

Hulme's insistence on the Absolute, however, that psychological twist, leads him into the strange impasse in which, criticizing man for failing to express himself entirely through matter, he interprets man through that matter. "Nothing is what it is, alone." Thus he climbs from the cinders to deny that the world can be considered as separate fragments at all! Here he is linking man to the inorganic world, as he was forced earlier to link him to the Divine, in a new philosophical tyranny.

More consideration of the purely human, might have shown him that fragmentary outlooks are irrelevant where the question of changing "reality" is concerned, at least "reality", devoid as it is of people. Language and a space between words does not break up "reality", though it may break up our reactions to it, or reform them. The error lies again in excessively objective thinking which allows no place to man, the psychological twist which sees "reality" in a heap of stones, but none in a crowd. The

need is therefore now for a philosophy which shall include psychology, instead of roping it off, and by integrating man, do something to integrate his society, from the individual upwards into institutions. For that, we shall need a Horatio with belief in the bridge, for to disbelieve in it now is the essence of psychological Fifth-Columnism.

XAQUIXAGUANA

IN THE LAKE of pools

Where icebergs stand firm on the ground,
And refrain to move for beauty of their image,
Five Temples lie wounded in their sides
Each plundered and more progressive than the last.
I speak of the one with the grey-cruised sleepers
Sitting in the splint-blue cave.
Especially he, of the up-side-down burial
With arrows set like buhls in the rib of the wreck :
Who was this white man of Peru ?
And what flat burial did he deserve
To stir their sandstone agave ? To face emerald sky
And snarling rocks where the sun's tied up,
Lying stiff among gold filaments and animate clay
Snouting azreal forms and intricate beads :
Those Huacas spread and exposed under cacti waterbeds,
Green as tunas, weathered with poisoned alizarin darts
Who was this man who stole their store of gold ?
Who found down here down Pilcomayo way,
Near lion grass and glass birds sailing the lake,
Who was he, that lies buried at the Haravec's feet
Aggrieved by this ice and basaltic sheet.

LYNETTE ROBERTS

THE CLASHING ROCKS

By JACK LINDSAY

MANY EFFORTS HAVE been made to interpret the tale of the Argonauts according to the formulas of myth-reduction which happened to be in fashion. Forchhammer tried to show underlying weather-myths; Mannhardt applied the Solar Theory; K. O. Muller considered the basis to be rituals of sin-cleansing and reconciliation; Shroeder saw Jason as the Spring-Hero; Faust sought to disentangle a Nature-Myth; Svoronos rationalized the Golden Ram as a prowhead; J. R. Bacon suggested that the quest was connected with the gold trade and the Asiatic trade-routes culminating in Colchis.¹

No doubt in certain points these theories succeed in clearing up some of the myth's aspects. A great myth such as that of the Argo is sure to reveal a complex fusion of ideas and rituals; and we cannot understand the forces making it of such profound significance for the Greeks unless we appreciate the richness of elements combining into the full effect. But at the same time we are on unsure ground until we have discovered the originating bases. Only then can we go on securely to dissect the layers of accretion, the transforming impacts. Here we deal with one episode as a pointer to the level of custom in which the basic origins of the whole myth are to be sought.

The motive of the Clashing Rocks certainly formed part of the early versions of the tale. It is the only episode of the quest which the Homeric poems directly describe; and it is significant of the amount of remodelling that went on with regard to the myth, that for Homer the dangerous passage occurs during the Flight, not as in later versions during the journey to Colchis.² When we consider further

¹ See *The Voyage of the Argonauts*, Janet Ruth Bacon (1925) for discussion of the various theories with refs. The gold trade thesis goes back as far as Strabo.

² *Od.*, xii, 69 ff. The other refs. are to characters of the myth. A fragment of the *Nostoi* (argument to Eurip. *Medea*) refers to the rejuvenation of Aison by Medea.

the way in which vase-paintings show a relation between Jason and Dragon quite unlike that of the literary myth, we are sufficiently warned that the myth as we know it has most likely disguised and transposed and censored the original forms.

The account in the *Odyssey* runs as follows :—

On one side there are beating rocks, and against them the great wave roars of dark-eyed Amphitrite. These, ye must know, are they the blessed gods call the Rocks Wandering. By this way even winged things may never pass, nay, not even the cowering doves that bear ambrosia to Father Zeus, but the sheer rock evermore takes away one of these, and the Father sends in another to make up the tale. Thereby no ship of men ever escapes that comes hither, but the planks of ships and the bodies of men confusedly are tossed by the waves of the sea and the storms of ruinous fire.

One ship only of all that fare that sea hath passed this way, even Argo, that is in all men's minds, on her voyage from Aetes. And even her the wave would lightly have cast there upon the mighty rocks, but Here sent her by for love of Jason.¹

All the later versions of the myth, save that of euphemizing Diodoros, include this episode. The expanded form directly relates the Doves to the Argo's passage. Faced with the sight of the terrible rocks, the voyagers send a Dove ahead. It flies through successfully, but its tail-feathers are caught. Then the ship follows the bird's example, and gets through with the loss only of its stern-ornaments.² After that the Rocks, having been baffled, stand forever apart.

This later attempt to harmonize the motives of the Doves and of the Argo that pass through the Rocks shows signs of strain. Why, if the baffling of the Rocks makes them stand apart, does not the passage of the Dove end their clashing? The parallelism of Dove and Argo then becomes highly suspicious. It seems likely that Bird and Ship are

¹ Transl. Butcher and Lang. For the various accounts, Bacon, 79.

² I think there is some obscure relation to the "missing part" of the Sumerian Ark: Campbell Thompson, *Epic of Gilgamech* 46, n. 3.

doublts. And if we consider the whole of the myth we find a further parallelism. The Argo is taking the way that the flying Ram had previously taken. Apparently about the same spot as the Rocks are meant to be located (the entry to the Black Sea) a similarly dangerous moment occurred for the Ram and its passengers. One of the passengers fell overboard. Helle fell and gave her name to the Hellespont. Thus we meet a series of similar motives. The Ram drops one passenger and gets through with the other; the Dove loses its tail-feathers but gets the rest of itself through; the Argo loses part of its stern but otherwise gets safely through. Is this parallelism an accident?

And now, having had our suspicions aroused, let us look back at the Homeric account. What are the Doves doing there so prominently in connection with the dangerous passage? The later version appears to be an effort to solve this problem. The Doves were somehow organically connected with the Clashing Rocks. Since they could not be eliminated, they were related to the Argo-episode in a way which betrays the expedient by the parallelism that we noted—a parallelism that destroys the point of the explanation given. If the baffling of the rocks ended the danger-spell, the bird alone did the job.

A folktale from Rumania has attracted attention as embodying the motive.¹ It tells how Floria showed kindness to a stork, which turned out to be the stork-king. Floria was given a feather to burn if in dire need. When he was bidden to fetch the waters of life and death, he invoked the stork's aid. The stork summoned its subjects and inquired where lay the waters and their clashing guardian-rocks. A lame half-plucked stork knew, and undertook the quest from which all the better-feathered birds

¹ Gaster, *Roumanian Bird and Beast Stories*, "Why the Stork has no tail," 263-5; cf. Ralston, *Russian Folktales*, 235 ff.; Hahn, *Gr. v. alban. Märchen*, ii, 644; Frazer, Apollodorus, *The Library*, ii, app. v.

shrank. Food was tied to his wings and two bottles to his legs. Nearing the Clashing Rocks, he was met by a swallow, the guardian-spirit, who told him that the Rocks rested at noon and that he would be safe as long as he did not touch them with his wings. The stork filled the two bottles, but flicked the rocks with his wings and escaped only by a supreme effort, losing his tail. When he returned, the other storks mocked him; but the king bade them look at their own tails, and they found they too were tailless.

This tale belongs to a type found all over the world explaining how the shape, colour, marks, etc., of some bird, beast, reptile, plant, came about. Incidentally, it shows how common is the doubling process in the development of folktales. There is no reason why the brave stork should appear as damaged at the outset of the adventure. But folktales love the cinderella-type; and since this hero in the course of the tale becomes damaged, he gets the damage-motive doubly attached to him.

But one startling fact emerges, which has not been seen by those who cite this tale in illustration of the *Odyssey*. Here we find the Bird as the journeyer, and moreover a Bird associated with life-waters. The tale is therefore akin to the *Odyssey*-account with its ambrosia-bearing Doves, but only vaguely related to the rationalized versions of the post-Homeric myth. It therefore strongly supports our suggestion that the Doves play a basic part in connection with the Rocks and that the trial-dove of the later versions is a superimposed motive devised in a desperate effort to harmonize the claims of both Bird and Argo. Another motive, that of the Bird-Guide, such as appears in the Babylonian and Hebrew tales of the Flood, is used to link Dove and Argo; but the flaw which we noted reveals the inorganic nature of the result.

This analysis, which sees in the Rumanian tale a clue to the original character of the Homeric Doves, is further

supported by the appearance of the motive, in a weakened form, in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius. Psyche, as part of her trials, is bidden to get some water flowing from a mountain-top out of spring that feeds the rivers of the Underworld. The slopes are excessively slippery. A bird comes to the heroine's rescue. It is an Eagle, which takes her bottle and darts *inter geras saeventium dentium et trisulca vibramina draconum*.¹ If we look back at the *Odyssey*-account we find that the Clashing Rocks are located next to a slippery skymount with an underworld-entry at its foot. There seems no doubt that the *Odyssey* and the tale of Psyche have the same complex of motives, and that this complex is closely related to the Rumanian tale, whereas the post-Homeric myth has largely departed from the original bases. Any attempt to explain the motive must therefore concentrate on the *Odyssey*-account.

A grateful bird and a quest for some life-giving substance or drink seem at the core of the motive. A quest for the life-waters is a common theme in European folktales; and it is generally associated with the motive of Faithful Animals, often with a helpful bird.² But what we are after is the primitive basis, and for that we must look to the variants in the Slav and Tartar areas. The Tatars show us the motive in all the full force and richness of its cultural significance. Thus, in a poem from the Sayan steppes the hero is saved by his sister's fetching of the life-waters; the Sagai poem *Altyn Pyrkan* tells of a hero saved by the heroine coming in guise of a gold cuckoo with the waters; the Kachin poem *Kara Tygan and Suksagal Khan* tells how the hero as a swallow riding on a horse changed to a swan

¹ *Met.* vi, 14 f. Cf. the Slav Glass Mountain.

² E.g. the quest for the waters of life occurs in No. 707 (Aarne-Thompson, *Types of Folktale*, FF Comm. 74, 1928), "The three Golden Sons"; No. 534, "The Grateful Animals"; No. 590 (the animals bringing the water to the hero); No. 550 (the animals aid the quest); No. 519, "The Strong Woman as Bride."

goes to the top of the Altai for a resurrecting white-herb in a raven's nest; the Kazak sage *Erkam Aidar* deals with the quest for the herb of healing.¹

Here we meet the motive as a central theme in culture; we may therefore conclude that we have run it home to the conditions from which it is generated. The friendly bird plays an important part in these poems and sagas in a way reminding us of the Homeric Doves, the Eagle of Psyche, the Rumanian Stork. Thus, in *Er Toshtuk*, a poem of the Kara Kirghiz, the hero saves the young of a raven from a dragon lurking about the tree's roots and is rewarded by being carried up from the underworld by the mother-bird. Food is tied to the bird, but is used up in the flight, and the hero cuts off bits of himself, which are later regurgitated and fixed back.

The Rumanian stork had food tied to his legs, and the Homeric Doves are ambrosia-bearers. The motive of the hero's feeding the bird with his own flesh need not detain us, though it has much interest and is probably derived from death-resurrection rituals of the kind attached to Medea. It is common in the Tatar poems. A collation of those poems with related tale-types from the Slav areas and the Near East, and with the great *Bear's Son* cycle, reveals an organic unity.² Curiously, the Argo-myth shows in other aspects a kinship with *The Bear's Son*. The episode of Phineus and the Harpies seems to have the same bases as the motive of the Demon-of-the-House-in-the-Wood, which occurs in many East-European versions of that tale-type.³

¹ These works will be found fully summarized, with others of the same type, Chadwicks, *Growth of Literature*, iii, Tatar Section. Ibid. for the way in which they derive directly from shamanist ritual and experience.

² For Slav and Near East versions, see Hartland, *Legend of Perseus*, ch. on Encounter with Basilisk Witch. For Bears-Son cycle in general, Panzer, *Beowulf* (*Stud. zur german. Sagengesch.* i, 1910); Bolte-Polivka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder u. Haus-M. d. Bruder Grimm* (1913-18), ii, 300; Chambers, *Beowulf*, an Intro., 369 ff., etc.

³ Bacon, 76 f.

This rapid survey has vastly increased the probability that behind the Homeric account lay a nexus of ideas akin to that shown in the Tatar poems, a nexus which the later versions did their best to dissipate. Our suggestion that the Homeric Doves gave the clue to the cultural bases seems to have considerable support. When we glance at the non-literary evidence about Jason and Medea we find the same kind of discrepancy between it and the developed literary myth as we found between the Homeric account and that myth. Thus, the essential thing about Medea seems to be the possession of, or some active relationship to, a Herb, a magical life-giving Herb, which saves or resurrects.¹ Jason in his obscure but important cult-forms seems basically a saviour with healing powers. On the vases he appears as a folk-hero rather than as the saga-adventurer. We see him entering the jaws of a monster, being vomited out of the monster's jaws, being pursued by a dragon or sea-serpent.²

Behind the literary Medea we feel something like the heroine of the Sagai poem who came with the life-waters in the guise of a gold cuckoo. Her full figure indeed certainly includes other elements; but in connection with her Herb she is rather in the vein of one of the magical Tatar heroines. It was her Herb that made Jason's triumph possible, even the rationalizing myth cannot omit that point.³ Apollonius Rhodius makes the main ingredient of her medicine the saffron from a crocus-like plant fed with the ichor from the suffering Prometheus. A vase, depicting the seizure of the Fleece, shows the Flower suspended between her and Jason. In view of her central function as a resurrector, and in view of the vases which depict Jason

¹ E.g. Rendel Harris, *Boanerges* (1913), ch. xlii. For M. as resurrector, Bacon, 129 ff.

² Reinach, *Vases Peints*, i, 137, and 101; Gerhard, *Etrusk. Spiegel*, ii, 222 (pl. 238).

³ Apoll. Rhod. iii, 853 ff.; Neapolitan vase figured, Roscher, s.v. Jason.

entering a dragon and being disgorged in corpse-like condition, there seems a good case to be made out for a Medea like the Tatar heroine. She revived her dead lover with the life-herb.¹

The Tatar themes are vitally related to shamanist practices and ideas. In large part they are direct rendering of the shamanist experience of the spirit-journey. The Bird, who carries the hero or fetches the life-giving substance, derives from the shamanist mine in which there is present a Bird both as a spirit-reality and as a form of the miming shaman. The shaman both rides a spirit-bird and is tranced into a bird-spirit. The quest for the redeeming substance reflects the rites in which he quests through the elements to save the soul of a sick man, penetrating if need be into the Underworld.

We have now succeeded in finding the general cultural level from which the nexus of imagery revealed by the Homeric account is derived. It remains to find the motive of the Clashing Rocks in that level and to trace out the ritual bases from which it springs.

South America provides a tale in which the motive appears in all its simplicity. The tale deals with twin-heroes who go in quest of their lost father. On finding him they have to pass through various tests in order to prove their kinship. One of the feats they accomplish is the passage between a pair of Clashing Rocks.²

The main origins of such a tale are not hard to find. It is a comparatively direct reflection of initiation-experience. During initiation the novices are submitted to various tests, trials, ordeals. If they pass successfully, they establish their

¹ The tale of Glaukos and Polyidos shows the life-herb was known to the Greeks.

² Ehrenreich, *Die Mythen u. Legenden d. Sudamer. Urvölker*, supp. Z. f. *Ethnol.* (1905), 50 f.

right to emerge at the other end into a higher status, into manhood. They can then claim the father.

Nor is it hard to guess from what particular part of the initiation-experience the imagery of the Clashing Rocks is born. A basic and widely recurrent image, to express the death-rebirth of initiation-passage, is that of being devoured by a monster and then vomited out. This image is general in the Australian initiations. In New Guinea and elsewhere we find it mimed with elaborate care. The monster is represented by a long-house, often devised to look like a kind of dragon, into which the novice is taken to die, to be devoured, and later to be vomited out. Inside he goes through the basic ordeal, learns the lore of his new status, and emerges a new person. If he dies under the ordeal, the women and children are told that he has been swallowed beyond power of return.¹ The Clashing Rocks can hardly be other than a magnified image of the gnashing jaws through which he has to pass into the unknown ordeal, into the monster's belly. (When he has got safely through, that point of passage no longer holds danger for him; hence the way in which the Argo's success petrifies the Rocks into harmless immobility.) Incidentally, it seems that the motive of the swallowed-disgorged initiate appears in the common Tatar motive of the Bird fed on the hero's flesh, which is later disgorged and reattached.

That this type of imagery was familiar to the ancient world is abundantly clear. As we saw, the vases show Jason in precisely the aspect of the novice swallowed and then vomited forth. Other heroes, such as Herakles, appear in tales where they are swallowed by monsters and have to hack their way out. The swallowing-motive is attached to the myths of the birth of Zeus and of Athena; it is prominent in the Egyptian account of the passage of the Night-Sun; it underlies the story of Jonah. In all these

¹ See accounts in *Golden Bough*, last vol., of Death and Resurrection rituals.

aspects it can be shown to have close relations to initiation-experience. The Tupi tale from South America, then, provides the clue for reconciling the motive of the Clashing Rocks with the Jason who appears in the vase-paintings.

Turning to ancient Mexico, we meet the motive again. The Aztec death-ritual had forms obviously derived from shamanist customs concerned with the guidance of the dead man along the difficult death-passage into safety. Clavigero tells how old men draped the corpse in the appropriate god-costume. They gave the dead man a jug of water for his journey and presented him at intervals with bits of paper. At the presenting of each paper, they outlined its purpose. With the first paper they said, "By means of this you will pass without danger between the two mountains which fight against each other."¹

These old men do not seem to have been in a mantic condition of spirit-possession; they were therefore not shamans in any full sense of the term. But they are carrying out an essentially shamanist function in guiding the dead, with whom they are ritually in contact. The custom could consequently have only arisen out of shamanist bases. In it we see the initiation-imagery, directly reflected in the Tupi tale, thrown on to the death-screen in order to explain what goes on during the imagined death-passage.

An account has been fortunately preserved by Howitt of the subjective experience of a Wiradjuri doctor (shaman) of the Kangaroo Totem in Australia during the initiation-rite. The detail that concerns us here occurs after the underworld-journey, when the novice got astride a thread and rode into the sky. "At the end of the thread was Wombu, the bird of Baiame (Maker). We went up through the clouds, and on the other side was the sky. We went

¹ Cited, Spence, *Magic and Mysteries of Mexico* (1932), 108 f. The other dangers were a great serpent barring the road, a crocodile, eight deserts, eight hills, and a sharp icy wind (abated by the old men burning all the dead man's clothes, arms, and some household goods).

through the place where the doctors go through, and it kept opening and shutting very quickly. My father said that if it touched a doctor when he was going through it would hurt his spirit, and when he returned home he would sicken and die . . .”¹

Here, astonishingly, we run to earth the whole nexus of the Homeric account. The clashing jaws of the passage-slit, the bird, the dangers resulting from contact with the jaws, the relation to a sky-ascent. The similarity is too close to be the result of chance. We see that the Homeric account is remarkably close to primitive shamanist bases. It has only been slightly rationalized in mythopoeic terms. And what it lacks to complete the picture can be filled in from other quarters. Thus, it is certain that the Homeric tradition knows the sky-gate which the Wiradjuri novice describes; for in the *Iliad* we find the Hours opening and shutting the cloud-gates for those who come and go on Olympus.² Further, another account by Howitt of initiation-ritual brings in the ambrosia-motive. The sky-ascent of the Wiradjuri novice had as its goal the highgod Daramulun above the clouds; and not only is Duramulun commonly the “monster” who kills and revives the novice in initiation, he is also the giver of a magic medicine to the person who passes through the death-rebirth.³

There can then be no doubt of the extremely primitive elements combined in the Homeric account. The mythopoeic ordering is very superficial. Under them can be clearly discerned the structure of shamanist experience.⁴

¹ Howitt, *J.A.I.*, xvi, 49 ff.

² *Iliad*, v, 749.

³ Howitt, *Natives Tribes of S.E. Australia*, 534 ff.

⁴ I cannot cite the Clashing Rocks from Tatar accounts. But the entry into the Underworld is there described as a passage through the Jaws of the Earth (*Growth*, iii, 207) in the possession-mime.

The Sa-kar-dawa festival in Tibet is held to propitiate the underworld-monster who keeps open his mouth to lure in birds, mice, etc.—clashing it shut on a certain day of the year, thereby killing all within. The entire Lhasa population on that day circuits the holy hill of Potala by the sacred road and then goes

The evidence from Tupi, Mexican, and Australian sources is sufficient to establish definitely the meaning of the motive. But it is of interest to find the motive familiar to the Polynesians. There it occurs in tales of the spirit-journey which are very similar to the Tatar poems and sagas. In one tale where the hero is travelling to the Fourth Hawaiki where the dead dwell, he has a narrow escape from "two great rocks which continually clash together and swing apart, so that anyone trying to pass is in danger of being crushed". He gets safely through, but his companion is caught and killed.¹ This tale, then, supports our interpretation of the flight of Phrixus and Helle on the flying Ram as a doublet of the Argo-voyage, though in that flight the passage-motive has also been lost. Not altogether lost, however, since Helle, who falls and dies, gives her name to the Hellespont—that is, to a dangerous place of sea-passage, with rocks on either side.

A tale from Mangaia, which deals with the exploit of Maui in bringing fire from the Underworld, suggests that our motive is ultimately identical with the common folk-motive of the charm that makes a mountain, or a great rock, split open, so that the person with the secret can pass through to gain a treasure, rescue someone, etc. If, however, a mistake is made, or the secret forgotten, the rocks clash to, and kill or imprison the adventurer.

Maui follows his mother and hears her utter a charm before a tall black rock :

Buataranga, descend though bodily through this chasm,
the rainbowlike must be obeyed,
as two dark clouds parting at dawn,
open up my road to the netherworld, ye fierce ones.²

to the Water Temple, where resides a female sea-serpent. Offerings are made and the higher officials sail on the temple-lake in boats of hide, D. Macdonald, *The Land of the Lama* (1929), 211.

¹ Chadwicks, *Growth*, iii, 290.

² W. W. Gill, *Myths and Songs from S. Pacific* (1876), 87 f.

Such a passage, precariously opened by magic, would be endowed with all the terrors of the Clash. The imagery of the charm shows the same basis as the Wiradjuri account of the sky-passage or the Homeric imagery of the cloudgates.

In one version Maui descends as a dragonfly on the back of a dove. Above we saw a Tatar hero make the spirit-journey as a swallow on a swan. With these images we may link the flight of the two children on the flying Ram in further support of our suggestion as to that flight's nature.

A tale from the Harvey Islands describes the flight of Maui and his grandfather out of a cleft or hole from the Underworld. A bird has shown the way. Here one of the pair, the grandfather, crashes. We then get the resurrection-motive. Maui puts the bones on the third day in a coconut-shell, closes the hole, shakes the shell, and brings his grandfather to life again.¹ One is reminded of Medea and her cauldron-magic that gives rebirth.

These Polynesian variants, then, give an idea of the way in which the motive can be combined, re-used, transformed by the mythopoeic faculty. Though they afford no decisive proof, they add persuasiveness to the suggestions made above as to the way in which the primitive bases might be split up, redefined, made to yield doublets, develop variants which at a later stage might be linked together, fused, superimposed.

We conclude, in summary, that the core of the motive of the Clashing Rocks is to be traced to the initiation-experience, the passage between two threatening jaws. Ultimately, the imagery goes back to what is technically known as the birth-trauma; thence it is that it draws its evocative and potent appeal. All initiation-imagery is in

¹ Gill, 63-9. This tale is explanatory, like the Rumanian one. It is: How the tern got its black markings. On such tales, Frazer, *Myths of the Origin of Fire* (1930), 215 f.

one way or another thus related to the birth-act and its unconscious trauma; the successful initiation-passage, overcoming the trauma, lifts the individual into a new level of integration, a sublimation of the deep pressing fears. The essential point of the passage through the jaws is the danger. Hence the idea that the danger comes from grinding rocks which will crush and maim. On the other hand the danger may be simply attributed to contact, as in the Wiradjuri account where the jaws are made of cloud and light. Rendel Harris saw the relation of the Clashing Rocks to the Dragon-jaws. "The real Symplegades are the Clashing Doors of the great Dragon of the Dark. Our heroes run a risk indeed in venturing into the interior of that dragon and making him disgorge."¹ But the passage is not a mere symbol of solar mythology. It derives from initiation-experience.²

But the Homeric account shows a combination of elements which proceed from more than a simple reflection of initiation-experience. It shows decisively a reconstruction of the motive which allies it with the Tatar and Polynesian myths and poems. The scene of the Rocks is that of the spirit-journey, with entries to the Underworld and the Skyworld at hand. The Planktes are the great danger threatening the aspirant who nears those entries. This orientation of the motive could proceed only from a shamanist basis such as is evident in the Tatar and Polynesian myths.³

¹ Harris, *op. cit.*, ch. xxxvi, dealing with the literalists who think the Clashing Rocks represent the dangers of venturing into the Black Sea.

² This point has been vaguely realized. "It is suggested that the picture of Jason's body in the serpent's mouth may be connected with some ordeal or rite in the Mysteries," Bacon, 22-5; Harrison, *Themis*, 368.

³ The waters of life play a prominent part in Polynesian mythology. See *Growth*, iii, 342, 388, 278; in Russian byliny, *ibid.*, ii, 42.

POEMS

LAMENT

MY MAN IS a bone ringèd with weed.

Thus it was on my bridal-night ;
That the sea, risen to a green wall
At our window ; quenching love's new delight,
Stood curved between me and the midnight call
Of him who said I was so fair
He could drown for joy in the salt of my hair.
We sail, he said,
Like the placid dead
Who have long forgotten the marriage-bed.

On my bridal-night
Brine stung the window.
Alas, on every night since then
These eyes have rained
For him who made my heart sing
At the lifting of the latch ;
For him who will not come again
Weary from the sea.

The wave tore his bright flesh in her greed :
My man is a bone ringèd with weed.

BRENDA CHAMBERLAIN

THE BLACK LADDERS

(To a shepherd mourning his mountain-broken dog)

THE TEARS YOU spill, clown David, crouched by rock
Have changed to nightmare quartzite, chips of granite.
The valley chokes with grief-stones wept from eyes

New-taught that death-scythes flash in the riven block
To reap warm entrails for a raven harvest.
Withdrawn in stone-shot gully of the barren ground,
You mourn, baffled by crevice and goat height
Proving tricky as dog-fox run to earth in the scree,
For one who lies in company of beetle-shard and sheep ;
For him whose loose-dropped brain and lungs hang coldly
Trembling from the flowered ledge down ice plant ways
to silence.

The tears you shed are stone. So leave the dead to stand
as monument.

Be shepherd friend again ; clown, grinning under wet eyes,
Stopping your ears to sound the valley breeds :
A corpse-man's cry for succour, a dead dog's howl.

BRENDA CHAMBERLAIN

NOTE ON A PLAY BY SYNGE

TO-NIGHT THE SOUND of planes was higher
And I thought of the shawled women of Inverara
Leaning against the wind as the sun went down
Watching the boats far out and the tide rising
Braced rigid as rocks with the words for lamenting :

I do not know what drowning is, or is like,
But as the sound of planes lifted along the sky
I thought of Inverara and the shawled women keening
As fiercely as the bowels of the sea had sucked
And covered the headlong hapless riders.

EWART MILNE

NIGHT JOURNEY

By ALUN LEWIS

AN HOUR BEFORE the midnight train left Paddington all the seats were full, the blinds all drawn, the corridor full of kitbags and suitcases and the burning ends of cigarettes. Several Welsh soldiers were singing Cwmrhondda and Aberystwyth and the more maudlin hymns of the Evan Roberts Revival. Every compartment was hooded and blue with smoke. Just before the train started a young captain with the badge of an infantry regiment on his black beret opened the door of one compartment, a third class one, and was about to make his way through into the corridor when a private soldier sitting in the corner said, "Here you are, sir, squeeze in here." He said, "Thanks a lot," and sat down. He was perspiring and dead white, he had no luggage, not even a respirator. He looked done in.

The crowded compartment looked at him with the same reserved inquisitiveness as the inmates of a small boarding house covertly examine a new resident at his first meal. There were two WAAF's. The bespectacled one simply wondered why he wasn't travelling first and thought he looked distressed. The one with lipstick, who had been interrupted in her tale of her boy friend Bob, a pilot who didn't give a damn and was wizard with a kite, patted her set waves self-consciously and looked at him with wide filmstar eyes. The tanks corps sergeant-major, a young sandy-haired man with facile features and the cocksure glance of the too successful, raised his fair eyebrows knowingly, discerning some irregularity. "Good evening, sir," he said politely. "Good evening, sergeant-major," the officer replied. Finally the R.A.F. corporal and his companion, a blonde civilian girl cuddled close under his shoulder, disturbed themselves sufficiently to

crane forward a moment before reposing again. The officer wiped his face with a dirty handkerchief, and then noticed that an aircraftsman was standing up in the compartment.

"I'm very sorry," the officer said. "You were here before me. I've taken your seat." He stood up, deferentially.

"That's all right, sir," the corporal said, craning forward again, the hooded light full on his bryll-creamed curls. "He's a prisoner. I'm escorting him to detention barracks, sir. He don't sit down."

"Oh, surely, that's not fair," the officer insisted, still offering his seat.

"He's standing up on my orders, sir," the corporal retorted.

The officer shrugged his shoulders.

The train slid a little, imperceptibly beginning its long journey, then jerked forward with a puff.

"My God," said the WAAF with lipstick. "It's actually moving. Well, as I was saying, when I asked Bob to take me up, he said, 'If you were fat and ugly I wouldn't mind risking it. But you—no, I won't risk you,' he said. Sweet of him, I thought."

"Maybe he just wanted something for nothing," the sergeant-major said with a naughty gallantry.

"You men," countered the WAAF, very haughtily. "Your thoughts never rise any higher than your manners. Well, Bob isn't that sort, thank you." She wanted to assert her value; she wasn't going to let him knock her price down; she sulked and considered what was best. The other WAAF was reading a Penguin.

"Got a penknife, sir?" the private asked. "I've lost my corkscrew." He had a bottle of liqueur whisky between his knees; he was evidently a man of importance in the compartment. They all looked at him, for the first time really; he'd only been a private soldier before. Now he

had a bottle of liqueur whisky. The sergeant-major was the first to produce a knife.

"Here you are," he said with alacrity.

"Thanks, major," the private replied. He was a tall groomed man, with smooth hair, a big chin blue with shaving, a clever surface-smartness in his nodding glance. He scraped away at the cork, smiling to himself. The WAAF hadn't considered him before. She looked interestedly at him now. After all, she hadn't actually *cut* him before.

"Would you ladies like a little chocolate while I'm opening this," he asked, passing a box of chocolates round. The WAAF fell on it with little girlish cries of delight.

"Now, gentlemen, a toast to us all," he continued, lifting the bottle to the light. "You, sir, first."

They all demurred; he reassured them. Sure, he had two more such bottles in his respirator, and 500 Players. They were welcome. Go on, sir. Sorry there's no wine-glasses. Nice drink isn't it? Got connections, see, sergeant-major. Go on, drink it up. My connections wouldn't give me poor stuff, don't you worry. Come on, lady, drink to that pilot boy of yours. Come on, corporal, sweeten your breath. What? Not allowed to drink on escort? What a sense of duty. Blimey. Well, what about the prisoner. Come on, prisoner. Sweet as your mother's milk it is. Take a good swig now. I won't be calling round in the morning, you know. Oh, come on, corp, let the poor sod have a drink. Being alive isn't much fun for him. Yeh, why not?"

"If the prisoner's going to have one I don't see why I should go without," the corporal said, anxious as a man who has bought a shirt too big for him and hurries back to the shop, blustering and dubious, to revoke the deal. "Sure, that's the spirit, that's swell," the soldier pattered. "Now that's how I like it. We're all social now."

"Or do you mean socialist?" the officer asked.

"Oh no, sir, begging your pardon, we're not socialist. Here's the capital, sir, here"—he patted the golden bottle—"and wherever you find capital you find the black market, and wherever you find the black market you find yours truly, sir. I'm not proud of being a capitalist, sir. It's just an inescapable fact, that's all, sir. Calls for another drink, I think, sir."

Here's a case, the sergeant-major's grin seemed to say, I'd like to get him on a fatigue, by God I'd shake him. He took a second draught with a friendly and local condescension.

"What shall I drink to?" the WAAF said coquettishly.

"You don't need to drink to anything," the soldier said. "You just want to drink, that's all, lady. However, drink to the rebuilding of Stalingrad, if you want to."

"Why in particular Stalingrad?" the officer asked. "Why not London?"

"Sure, London if you like. I don't mind. Every city's a job of work to me, sir. I'm an internationalist. Paid by America, Dupont of America, via the Chase National Bank—heard of it, sir?—no income tax on my salary, two thousand a year I get, sir. Before the war I put half the machinery into the Red October factory in Stalingrad, and I'll go and put it back in there after this little shake is over. I built factories in Magnitogorsk, too. Hitler won't see them, sir."

"Say, you're talking big," said the sergeant-major.

"Not particular big, major. I'm small fry. Only I get around, you know."

"And you're only a private, eh?"

"That's right, sir. I'm not ambitious. I'm all right. I've got connections in the Army. Got a living-out pass, got

a suite of rooms in the Swan in Dorchester and a taxi to take me to camp every morning. I'm sitting the same course for the fourth time. Usually they send you back to your unit if you fail it once, but they're letting me stay on because I'm keen to get through, you know, real keen. Very comfortable down there. Course I volunteered for the Army, you know. Only I'm not ambitious, not like you, sir, or you, major."

"Are you married, soldier?" the WAAF asked clumsily.

"Married, lady? What, me? I've got only the best wife in the world, that's all. Look, here she is." He fished a wallet out of his trousers and hunted among the white five pound notes for a couple of photographs. "There she is, lady. That was taken in Shepherds Hotel, Cairo. Here we are, both of us again, in the garden of the Grand in Bucharest."

"You look much nicer in tails than you do in battle-dress," she said.

"My battle dress wasn't made in Saville Row, lady," he laughed. "How d'you like my wife?" (She was a beautiful voluptuous woman in a glittering evening gown.) "She's a fine wife. Sends me 600 Players a week, and I love her like I'd just married her, though I got a son of seventeen. He's in the States, he is, apprenticed to Henry Ford. Good kid he is, too."

The stuffy compartment, overheated with the breath and talk and whisky, swaying a little with the advance of sleepiness and the unreality of the big names he flung out like attracting stars leaving their proper orbit, rocking with the gathering motion of the train, played a cartoonist's trick on them all. How absurd and how amiable they seemed, these little people with long and short noses, with vanities and illusions and daydreams, with their fatigues and desires and routines, their religion and bewilderment

and pettiness ! There was a gradual relaxation in them all, a common impulse to stretch their limbs and loose their guard. The WAAF leaned up against the sergeant-major ; he took her hand ; her regulation underwear crinkled the tight blue skirt against her thighs. He took her at his own valuation, pilot or no pilot. O.K. big boy. O.K., baby. The bespectacled girl let her Penguin lapse. She looked at the officer, dreamily, disinterestedly, as though there was something there that distressed her and wouldn't let her alone. Only the prisoner stood like a great dull bull, holding on to the strap, dark and swaying. His great sullen head and shoulders were in shadow, overpowering. He was a miserable devil. The whisky didn't seem to improve him at all.

"I'm an internationalist," the private soldier said. "I don't agree with wars between one country and another. I don't believe it. I got nothing against Russia. I worked there. Nothing against Germany. They're a smart lot, I take my hat off to them. America's the best of the bunch for a living. England's the salt of the earth. I didn't make this war, and I'm not fighting it. Ever had your fortune told, lady ? I'll tell it for you with this pack of cards. O.K. ?"

"I believe you're a Fifth Columnist," the WAAF said lazily, snug in the sergeant-major's arms. She shuffled uneasily, paused, sat up, looked at him with a frown, puzzling over him. Certainty dawned in her silly eyes. She pointed a hand at him, hard and splenetic. "That's what you are, you're a fifth columnist. I know you are." Her hard grasping voice had the high pitch of hysteria. "You can't fool me," she jeered. "You dirty fifth columnist. And they'll get you."

"Aw, shut up," he said. "I never had no education but I don't make a fool of myself in public like you, lady. Ever been in the Ritz ?"

"What do I want with the Ritz?" she shouted, screaming with laughter. In the unreality of the moment the dark prisoner moved towards the corridor. The door was open into the corridor.

She was laughing uncontrollably.

"The fifth column dine in the Ritz," she shouted, waving her arms and body from the waist upwards like a snake.

"Look here, lady, I never been insulted like this before. Look here, I got Commander Anthony Kimmins's autograph here, see? He gave it to me when we was playing billiards after lunch in the Ritz."

"He's a liar," she shouted, terrible tears in her eyes. "They're all liars. Bob took me to the Ritz for a week-end, and I'm going to have a baby now, I'm going to have a baby," she was weeping now, "and he got himself posted to another squadron, he did."

"Your prisoner's gone, corporal," the sergeant-major said with the coolness of a man in the thick of mechanized battle.

"Christ," the corporal gasped, suddenly white, his enjoyment of the scene sucked out of him. He jerked himself to his feet, pulling out revolver. "I'll get the swine."

The officer pulled him back by the neck of his jacket.

"Put it back, you fool," he said quietly, and slipped past the corporal into the corridor.

The Welsh soldiers were singing their national anthem in harmony, softly and most tenderly, alto and tenor and bass moving back and forth like searchlights over the range of sound. The prisoner was leaning by an open window, looking at the misty moonlit fields.

"Hallo, prisoner," the officer said. "They've just missed you."

"I was born just over them fields, sir," the prisoner

said, heavily, slowly, peaceably. "See that level crossing there? Used to go over that to school every day."

"Never mind," said the officer. "We'd better go back now. Both of us." Both men sighed, and turned away from the misty white fields, and returned.

CAROL

AND SO THE rain, the gentle tears of Christ,
Ran in my heart and washed my spirit white;
I rose and walked, a virgin to the feast,
And heard a lamb call in the chilly night.

But wind was bitter and the moor was high
And as I turned, I heard the cry of pain.
And, wrapped in woollen clouts, as warm I lay
I knew that I must bear the cross again.

HENRY TREECE

KEEP IT GOING

By E. M. DELAFIELD

"HOW TOO PRE-WAR!" screamed half the guests whilst the other half shrieked: "Darlings! Is this a dream or what?"

The Mostyns tried to look as natural as they could, but it was difficult when they saw the effect that was being produced by their splendid array of bottles, their potato-crisps, little cheese-straws and strips of beetroot surrounding translucent balls of pickled onion.

Really, for November, 1942, they'd done marvels.

If there was a weak spot at all, in the party, it was just the guests. The really amusing people had, most of them, not been able to come, and at least three of those present were people whom Mick Mostyn loathed, while four of the others always made Bog Mostyn feel sick at her stomach.

Still, everyone was making a great deal of noise, especially the ones who'd had a couple before arriving at the party at all. Tattie Bindles, indeed, was doing more than her share and making noise enough for six.

"I've heard of you, my sweet," she yelled into the various flushed faces that swam up at her out of the splendid haze of the party. "I've heard of you. Do say you've heard of me!" Almost everybody answered: "Sweet! *Heard* of you! *Everyone's* heard of you!"

As soon as Tattie Bindles had told them one of her cracks and while she was still shrieking with mirth, they turned away and said to the nearest person:

"Dearie, *who* is the one in ginger slacks and blue eyelids, ought I to know?"

One rather honest guest, a woman who lived—believe it or not—in Gloucestershire or somewhere, if one could call that living, and had been invited rather by mistake, said to Tattie Bindles: "I'm afraid I didn't hear your name."

"Darling, I'm Tattie Bindles!" screamed Tattie Bindles, whilst tears of mirth poured down her face, making

most peculiar olive-coloured runnels in her make-up, which was war-time petunia, and not very good.

"I know you won't believe me, but it's honestly my name. Tattie Bindles. It's simply unbeatable, isn't it? I'm a bigamist, too."

The woman from Gloucestershire was not as much amused by this as Tattie Bindles had hoped. She made a vague sound, and egotistically turned away.

To Tattie Bindles' horror she was for a split second alone, and one or two people seemed to be leaving.

"Keep it going, pets, keep it going!" yelled Tattie Bindles, and she executed a leap in mid-air waving her glass above her head, that four or five years ago had been known as Tattie's *too* lovely Red Indian act.

It was not now particularly applauded, because most people didn't remember it and those who did were perhaps rather tired of it, but several people looked at Tattie, particularly the quaint old sweet on whose foot she came down at the end of the leap.

"Darling, darling, don't tell me it didn't hurt because I *know* it did!" Tattie Bindles cried as she regained her balance by clutching at the arm of a silly old man who at once upset his glass of sherry down his absurd *corps diplomatique*-looking trousers.

"A party never *begins* to move until things get spilt." shrieked Tattie Bindles, and now her shriek had attained to such dimensions that people really did look at her and she felt she was keeping things going for the Mostyns, poor bogus, idiotic, sub-normal angels that they were, bless them.

But the party was coming to an end, all the same.

People were yelping their good-byes, or else swaying and lurching away without bothering to utter any, and Bog Mostyn was practically asleep on a sofa, and Mick was kissing a girl who, Tattie Bindles suddenly realized, was wearing odd shoes—one high green morocco one and one

black felt slipper with fur edges. "My God, darling, what a thought ! Look at this, people, she's wearing odd shoes ! I do call that 'cute, don't you ? When I was in darling New York I once went to a party wearing—"

"But I've got a bad foot," said the girl crossly. "I have to wear a slipper. I hurt it in the factory, doing munitions—"

Tattie Bindles began to tell a tough story about munition-makers, but still the party continued to slip away until only about five people were left, drifting down the stairs to the amusing little room where the funny coats and definitely entertaining hats had been left.

Tattie Bindles herself had a hat—a black-and-yellow pancake. "I have to, because I've got ear-ache, pets—really—truly ear-ache."

They paid no attention.

She wasn't making things go.

Tattie Bindles threw herself down on the floor, flat on her back.

"I've got to go home," she announced in a high, thin yelp. "Someone's got to take me home immediately, directly."

The party remnants, who were evidently all of the type that is just rendered morose by drink, went on muttering amongst themselves.

Tattie Bindles drummed with her heels on the carpet.

People just moved their chairs out of the way.

"Keep the party going," Tattie Bindles wailed.

Then she sang it, to a rather operatic kind of tune that she had never heard before.

Then she sat upright on the floor and glared round her.

Mick was sitting with his arm round the girl in the odd shoes, and there was a man in khaki leaning against a wall with his eyes shut, and two women and one man arguing about a book, standing in the middle of the room.

Tattie Bindles scrambled to her feet and climbed on to a chair and gave them an imitation. She knew it *was* an imitation, anyway.

And still no one took any notice.

They must be terribly, terribly drunk.

Still, there must be some way of giving them a jolt and keeping the party going.

Tattie Bindles, rocking on her chair, caught sight of the terribly amusing Victorian red-plush bell-rope that hung against the wall.

She leaned forward perilously, missed it, grabbed again, and rocked triumphantly back into position, grasping it.

She wound the red length round and round her neck, laughing and screaming and at last stamping and dancing, so that the cane seat of the chair began to make amusing noises.

None of the dull, drunken, selfish creatures so much as looked round.

Even Bog Mostyn, who suddenly walked in wearing a silk nightgown, only said : "Shoo, shoo !" to all of them and waved her hands.

"You must go now," she said. "I'm so tired. Shoo !"

"Keep it going !" Tattie Bindles repeated and although the pitch of her voice was now really diabolical, it attracted no notice at all.

The party, in various degrees of intoxication, was breaking up.

People kissed one another, moaned, screamed, swore, and stumbled.

The man in khaki pulled himself away from the wall, reeled forwards and kicked over the chair from which Tattie Bindles was trying to keep things going.

When the chair lay on its side on the carpet, she hung from her neck by the rope. The noises she made were not really as noticeable as many of the other noises she had been making all through the party.

Anyway, nobody noticed them and by the time the room was empty they had quite stopped.

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

GO DOWN, MOSES. WILLIAM FAULKNER. Chatto and Windus. 9s.

FOR SOME BOOKS past it has been necessary to invest a considerable amount of mental capital in William Faulkner before drawing readers' dividends; but *Go Down, Moses*, with its seven stories of slaves and whites, demands too much subsidy.

Those who fell for *Sanctuary* may have regretted Faulkner's unwinding in serpent sentences with their coils for balance and hypnosis; but his expression found matched content in a Southern land of decaying mansions, colonels, and ultimate swamps: a world of being and not becoming in which the long sentence, saying a thing was not this or this but this, revealed itself as no mere spell but a mechanism to eliminate human will, to create a dynasty of death. And now, it seems, he would demand new living space, having achieved complete expression of that death territory in *The Wild Palms*; and perhaps his faithful readers will have to endure as much as intervened between *Sanctuary* and *The Wild Palms* while the author either evolves a technique to suit a new empire or discovers some fresh border world content to explore with the manner he has so carefully elaborated. In *Go Down, Moses*, Faulkner is left with the style without the justification or even interest.

An American reviewer has suggested that this new work shows conscious striving for biblical effect. The essential drama of the bible, however, does not lie in the tale of race, of blood; those confounding lists of "begats" are really the light entertainment, the jam stirred in for the Jewish reader who has a curious and particular interest in this sort of domestic detail. One can see what the American reviewer meant, that Faulkner has tried to use the "he in his time and his father before him and his great-grandfather" note

to gain grandeur. But all this is without avail when there is no divine spark kindled for the slave who hunts for buried treasure in the land which grows his crops or is driven insane by the loss of his wife ; indeed the best the reader can record is his effort to follow what is happening. The frustration remains : that Faulkner now wants to deal with strong, violent life with a will to be, the Negro who is breaking from the master-slave pattern, while the means he is using are those which served so well for the history of the degenerate white who collapsed with it.

RONALD DEWSBURY

THE GREATEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD. Flying-Officer X. Cape. 2s.

SOME OF THE stories in this slender volume will be familiar to readers of the *News Chronicle*, and it is surprising that no acknowledgment has been made to the editor of that journal who published them before they appeared in this collection.

As a writer about the R.A.F., Flying Officer X—a well-known author of short stories—does not appear to be altogether at home in his new environment. It is impossible not to feel that the pilots of whom he writes know their job better than their impressario.

It would perhaps be splitting too fine a hair to observe that the "greatest people in the world" all belong to Bomber Command, but it may be that the author has had no contact with Fighter Pilots . . . yet somehow we cannot forget the Battle of Britain.

In this volume there is only one story that can stand unsupported by marionette strings. The Young Man from Kalgoorlie, is a clever, interesting story, and is fortunately, gentle prospective reader, the longest.

"GREMLIN"

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FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT SIMPSON'S is the most recent of these books and it says much for its quality that a reviewer by no means starved of R.A.F. literature, finds it also the best. The others all have their points, and plenty of them. Thus, *Squadron 303* is the story of the Polish fighter squadron with the R.A.F. Most of us in 1940 heard sufficient of the fighting frenzy of the Poles ("you can't keep them out of the air") for this book to need little further recommendation. But it might usefully be added that Squadron 303 was "entrusted with one of the most vital sectors—in fact the most important of all—the defence of London itself". *Ten Fighter Boys* (only seven were still alive in the summer) also gives the record of a squadron—the original Spitfire squadron. It fought over Rotterdam, The Hague, Dunkirk, and moved into the front line of London in August, 1940. "Since then, it has done its quota over the Atlantic, the North Sea, France, Belgium, and Holland."

Sky Sweepers seems at first sight as if it will redress the number of books by officers, rather than pilot-officers, but the sergeant in question was a journalist, and his book interests mainly as a more professionally written write-up of what is by now beginning to be familiar in outline, though here more definite in detail. Flight-Lieutenant Crook, D.F.C., writes of his experiences with Squadron 609, a Yorkshire auxiliary squadron which numbers among

its successes the Battle of Weymouth and the shooting down of a Dornier near Victoria Station. I have the impression that official deletions contribute here to one's feeling that more might have been made of the material. Nevertheless, the alert reader will learn plenty that is new to him—unless he is already aware that, for instance, "At the end of Dunkirk, in June, one-quarter of the pilots in Fighter Command had been killed." *Spitfire Pilot* was written as a journal while the squadron was at readiness; *Ten Fighter Boys* differs in that each pilot writes of his own flying experiences, the whole being edited by a Wing-Commander and a Squadron-Leader. Neither of these volumes entirely avoids being "another book on the R.A.F.", but both add further to our knowledge and to posterity's understanding of the pilots; if a great many of them seem by now to have written books, let it never be forgotten that there were only 250 to stand between us and the Luftwaffe in September, 1940; that they stood, and for it, may not stand again. It is impossible, I feel, not to wish to know as much as they are able to reveal of the qualities that made possible a victory which depended mainly on planning on potentialities.

Flight-Lieutenant Simpson has the advantage over many writers—or, one should say rather, pilots—that he is of more mature mind than most. Thus he is able not only to give more adequate expression to his experiences, he interests us more acutely in his resolution of them. I use both those words "acutely" and "resolution" with extreme and respectful deliberation. His suffering was acute, and only his resolution, in every sense of the word, enabled him to survive, again in every sense, what he went through. Shot down in flames over France on the day that the Germans invaded the Low Countries, he spent eighteen months in hospital in occupied France. By now, we know from other books, alas, how long the agony of dressing

for bad burns must take, but we can never rehearse too well the spirit which enables a man to go through with them, or to persist in keeping sane while he endures conditions which result in what should have been the avoidable loss of his hands. There is a Websterian horror about much of this book, but there is also an absence of self-pity and what can only be termed a dogged faith in a hounded hell.

One is appalled at what the human spirit can be called on to suffer, and in the plentiful evidence we have of what that spirit can do, we may be the more saddened at the channels into which it is forced for performance. But the great, and for the reader, the ennobling, thing about Flight-Lieutenant Simpson's courageous book is that he used his spirit not just to conquer his sufferings, which would have sufficed, but to continue through them his manhood. In this, he speaks for all—for the more exuberant pilots, in whom "raciness" is a makeshift for expression, as well as for all those who, not flying, but in the Navy, the Merchant Navy, and the unsung Army—don't let go. I am sorry to end so tamely. But one bows sometimes because the light is strong, and sometimes because one's eyes have tears; only very seldom because of both. "You don't let go" is all one can say as one raises them.

In this rare book, it should be added, the author contrives to give a picture of France which, to my way of thinking, is more vivid because less vulgar, than Elliot Paul's *A Narrow Street*. He tells what it was like to be an Englishman helpless, suppurating, fly-ridden, and maggot-breeding in an invaded country; he preserves detachment and interest to tell of the bewilderment of that country (as well as of himself, and his colleagues at the French conduct of that side of the war which they met), and he hands to us not only a subjective picture of high fulness of bravery, but of an appreciation so complete as to be unconscious,

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of those he met of like spirit—Flight-Sergeant Odell, Corporal Tomlinson, who saved him physically, and many others who added to his rescue, including the nurses he knew (how few would) didn't mean to be cruel to him, and that American lady whose generosity has, up till now, been the theme of more taunts than tributes.

We have for long been proud of the R.A.F. Here, as in *Fighter Pilot*, we may find grounds for the essential humility of man's soul.

ROBERT HERRING

LETTERS FROM SYRIA. By FREYA STARK. John Murray. 9s.

THIS COLLECTION OF letters, written during 1927-8, is a record of the author's determination "to think in Arabic". What a fascination this tongue has for the English! It must have needed a high degree of endurance to withstand the Damascus dwelling she so vividly describes, but enthusiasm makes all things possible.

The book is full of gay stories and the evocation of the eastern landscapes that are common to all of Miss Stark's books, though the photographs seem less carefully chosen than usual. It was a feat to travel at that time through the country of the Druses but the difficulties prevented all but superficial impressions of the people. According to a note, some personal impressions have been omitted from the correspondence. It might have been better for more to have been deleted as it is jarring to read, first of the beauty of the old wall at Rhodes and then a sentence that seems to condone the Italian domination of the island. It was common knowledge throughout the Mediterranean that the inhabitants were unhappy under Italian rule.

The volume, otherwise, will increase our nostalgia for



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the days when travel was possible, especially if we read of the mosques, the coloured marbles, and the old temples on a foggy evening. We get a delightful impression of the ups and downs leading to final mastery of another language that will be generally appreciated in these days when foreign textbooks seem almost as popular as novels.

BRYHER

SHORT JOURNEY. E. L. WOODWARD. Faber. 10s. 6d.

IT IS A pity that the present paper restrictions prevent more than a brief notice of this interesting book. Mr. Woodward writes convincingly of educational problems because he relates them to his own schooldays. He was one of the few who are born to be scholars and he describes his progress from a London day school to Oxford, thence to Paris for further study and, later, his military experiences in the last War. He returned to a fellowship at Oxford after a brief stay at the Foreign Office. It is greatly to his credit that he foresaw the dangers of German domination and a second European struggle.

The author suffers from a sense of guilt for having accepted the position where he could obviously do his most useful work. This is a greater criticism of the academic life than anything he writes of it. What is wrong is that a system intended for a few highly specialized workers should be made the intellectual standard for numbers of people who require a different training. Now that the future of education is being discussed so widely, this is a volume that should have a wide circle of readers.

LAMBERT STONE

A SHORT HISTORY OF GERMAN LITERATURE.

GILBERT WATERHOUSE. Methuen. 6s.

THIS BOOK IS primarily intended for students, but its treatment of German writers is so unequal that it scarcely fulfils its purpose of being a short guide. The author seems



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influenced by the opinions prevalent in Germany during the last years, thus, he writes excellently upon the epic and heroic poetry but his account of Goethe can hardly have been written in any spirit of warm admiration and he ends by calling Thomas Mann "elegiac and decadent". Had the author written on medieval Germany alone, his book would have been of value to students. It would be a pity, however, to give the volume as it stands to pupils ignorant of German history for there is little mention of the heroic but vain struggle many Germans carried on to bring their country into line with modern conceptions of freedom and justice.

MORID SPALDING

THE RAFT and SOCRATES ASKS WHY. Two Conversations by ERIC LINKLATER. Macmillan. 4s. 6d. MAJOR LINKLATER HAS already written (in *The Northern Garrisons* and *The Highland Divisions*) State-aided propaganda which is both telling and dignified. His latest "Conversations", in the style of *The Cornerstones*, again place eloquence at the service of patriotism, without allowing the former to become inflated into bombast or the latter to dwindle into prattling pride.

He writes of six men adrift on a raft in the Atlantic. "They are in the borderland between life and death and they wear a look of peace. Their minds have been released from pain and their thoughts make conversation." It is neither idle nor 'literary' conversation, and it must be stressed that never for one moment is there any suggestion of that kind of whimsy hocuspocus which might make these men outward bound for a thunder rock. The men talk of what is nearest to them and that, to generalize, is how they lived and why they died. "Sailors do their duty," says one. "But don't ask me why. It isn't that England has given them so rich rewards that all their hearts must overflow with gratitude. England has never given them

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more than a scavenger's wage, a dirty bunk in the bows of a six-thousand-ton tramp when afloat and two rooms in a slum when ashore." The stoker replies, "My wife always kept them clean and tidy." But the wireless operator won't be put off. "You may have a wife that looked after you, but that doesn't mean you had a Government that looked after you." National problems are argued, conditions are criticized. The anomaly that "when we had no visible reason for confidence, confidence returned" is discussed, and out of it all comes each man's examination each in his own way of the mystery that animates him—duty. The stoker concludes, "We are what we are and if there was no good in us, we'd have rotted and gone long since. You needn't look for perfection, now nor never, and there are rats in every ship. Too many rats. But the rats don't rule the ship." Finally, other voices break in—those of rescuers. One of them is startled to find the men alive. But another knows better. "Alive? Of course they're alive. Men like these don't die as easy as you'd think."

In *Socrates Asks Why*, a conversation in Elysium as was *The Cornerstones*, the Athenian sage, Lincoln, Voltaire, Dr. Johnson, and Beethoven are presented in discussion of the war. To them enter a flying-officer, a piper, and an American sergeant. They speak well in character, their arguments are cogent and the views expressed on all sides are impeccable; but I myself can never be presented with after-death dialogues of the famous departed, without a feeling of what I would call em-Barrie-ssment. Post-world wisdom and whimsy seem to go hand in hand. Of that, *The Raft* is gallantly free, and it has the further virtue of meeting Mr. Coward's piece of hydrated heroics on its own ground and doing all that it doesn't do, and much that it does—but better.

R. H.